

THE CHURCH ENCOURAGED AND EXHORTED

NO. 2799

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 5, 1902
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 27, 1878

“Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”
Isaiah 43:6

IF you will look at the connection of these words, you will see that they were spoken with the view of encouraging the church, “Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the East, and gather thee from the West; I will say to the North, Give up; and to the South, keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” The Lord loves His church, and He loves to see her full of courage and confidence, but sometimes, her ministers appear to labor in vain, and to spend their strength for nought. The services in connection with the various agencies of the church appear to be like ploughing upon a rock. The bread is cast upon the waters, according to the Lord’s command, but it is not found again even after many days have passed away.

At such times, the church begins to tremble, she is full of fear. She cannot give up her mission, which is, the enlightenment of the world, but she is very apt to continue in it with a faint and feeble heart, and consequently, to do what she is doing as a matter of mere routine, with very little zeal, or love, or hope, or joy.

Now, beloved, the Lord would not have it so. He intends that His cause and kingdom shall prosper in the world. It is written concerning the Messiah, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law,” and He would not have His people to be discouraged. Does not the husbandman, after sowing his seed, wait a long while for the precious fruits of the earth? And for such fruits as those which are to be reaped by us we may well be content to wait, not merely for weeks, or for months, but for centuries.

We need not be in such a hurry as we often are. God has great leisure. He lives not merely in time, He inhabits eternity. A thousand years are to Him but as one day, so He can afford to wait. We are only children, and we feel that we must have something done at once, or we may be dead and gone, and never see it, but JEHOVAH is ever the same, and of His years there is no end, so He bids us cease to judge by the appearances after a few days or years of toil for Him, and to believe in the grandeur to be revealed in the ages yet to be, for ere the end of the age, this prophecy must be fulfilled, and Christ shall “set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.”

My subject on this occasion, is intended to cheer up the workers for Christ, to encourage those who are seeking to serve the Lord, by giving them full assurance that the Lord has a people whom He means to save, that they will be saved, are being saved now, and that it becomes us to see to it that we help, each one of us according to his or her own measure, in this glorious work.

I. The first truth that I see in the text is that THE LORD HAS CHILDREN FAR AWAY, “Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Some of them are *far away in the matter of locality*. They are not dwelling where the Gospel is preached, they are nowhere near to the happy shores where the message of salvation is constantly being proclaimed, some of them are where roads have not as yet been made, and the commerce of civilization has not come.

I doubt not that in dark Africa, the Lord Jesus has multitudes of those who are redeemed with His precious blood—those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God—whom He is determined

to save, and in those lands of which Mr. Hudson Taylor spoke to us the other night, in Tibet, in Manchuria, in Tartary, Christ has a people whom He has ordained unto eternal life, and whom He means to bring unto Himself. In all nations, and among all kindreds, and people, and tongues, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, upon whom the eye of God is specially set, and of whom He has declared in His eternal purpose, “They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels.”

It should be a great encouragement to every missionary of the cross to know that the Lord has a people everywhere. He said to Paul, concerning Corinth, “I have much people in this city,” and that assurance encouraged the apostle to preach the Word there. We can never tell where the Lord has much people, but this we do know, our commission runs thus, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,” and one reason for this command is because the Lord has many of His sons and daughters who are far off as a matter of locality.

But we know that He also has many sons and daughters who are far off in a worse sense than this—for they are *far off as to character*—as opposed to God as darkness is to light. Alas, alas, that it should be so! Yet so it is, for the whole race of mankind has gone astray, but God has His chosen people amongst the fallen race.

Some of the human race have gone further astray than the rest by gross criminality, or by long continued habits of abominable filthiness, yet even amongst those who are reckoned to be beyond the pale of decent society—among those who have gone the full length of their tether, and who could not go any further in sin if they were to try to do so, the Lord still has sons and daughters whom, in due time, He intends to bring to Himself, and to save.

It is a great joy to us, when we think of the fallen masses of London, to know that many a daughter of our Lord shall be washed and cleansed though now impure, unhallowed, and vile. It is a comfort to us to think that many a son of God shall yet be redeemed by power, having already been redeemed by price, and shall be brought to Jesu’s feet, though now a slave to sin and an ardent lover of everything that is evil.

Oh, yes! the Lord has a chosen people whom He means to fetch out of the worst dens and kennels of London—a people whom He intends to allure away from the frivolities of fashion, the blasphemies of infidelity, and the degradations of superstition. He will effectually call them out from all their old associations, for He has chosen them, and Christ has redeemed them, and He will, in this sense, bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth.

There are some who are far off in another sense, it is not so much character that puts them far off from God, as their *not being in the way of hearing the Gospel*. The kingdom of God has come nigh to most of you. You, dear friends, who constantly occupy your seats here, or who attend other places of worship where Christ is preached, are not far off in this sense, you are near. Alas, that some of you should be so near the kingdom, and yet should not enter it! “Thou art not far from the kingdom of God,” said Christ to one of the scribes, yet we do not know that that man ever crossed the border line, and entered the kingdom.

It is a mournful fact that so many are willing to go down into the bottomless pit with Gospel invitations and exhortations ringing in their ears. Bitter indeed shall be that man’s cup who deliberately puts from him the cup of everlasting life, and bitter shall be the bread that he shall eat forever who refuses to take the Bread of life, even though it is set before him, and pressed upon his acceptance every Sabbath day.

But there are great numbers of persons even in our own land, who are not in the way of hearing the Gospel. They have been brought up under some form of religion which they believe to be right, but as long as they adhere to the faith of their fathers, they never hear the doctrine of free and full salvation by the grace of God. They are content with what they hear, but there is little likelihood of their ever being converted, for the Gospel, by which men are converted, is not allowed to have access to them. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is our firm conviction that there are many among them who are the sons and daughters of God, and who shall yet be brought near to Him.

It happens sometimes, that the more unlikely ones are the first to be converted. You probably remember the story of the man who went to hear George Whitefield preach, and who had filled his pocket with stones to throw at God's servant, but as he preached the Gospel, the man dropped one stone after another until, at last, all the stones were gone out of his pocket, and better still, God had taken the stony heart out of his flesh, and given him a heart of flesh.

There have been others, who have never heard the Gospel, yet who are opposed to it, but in some remarkable way, they hear it for the first time, and all their opposition is overcome. It is love at first sight with them, but it is true love. They lay hold on Christ by faith and are saved. When Lady Erskine was riding one day near where Rowland Hill was preaching in the open air, she paused and listened to him, and he put the Word of life so clearly before her that she accepted Christ there and then, and became one of the greatest helpers of the Methodist Reformation of the time.

The Lord may work in a similar fashion in other cases, those who seemed as if no one could get at them shall be reached by the Gospel, and be converted. The Lord does bring in His chosen ones, as I look round in this audience, I can joyfully recollect some of you, who did seem as little likely ever to be brought to accept Christ as any people on the face of the earth, yet here you are happy in the Lord, and rejoicing in His grace.

I am sure that with many of you, your own experience must make you feel that the Lord has other sons to bring from far, and daughters to come unto Him from the ends of the earth. If you will walk down any of our streets, and chalk upon the door of a house in which you think it is most unlikely that anybody will ever be converted, I should feel almost certain that someone will be brought to Christ, by divine grace, out of that very house. The grace of God often comes into the most unlikely hearts.

Once again, the Lord Jesus Christ saves by His grace some who are *far off in their own apprehension*. It is not really true that they have been more sinful than others, but they think they have. It is not because they do not hear the Gospel that they are not converted, for they do hear it, and generally, they are among the most attentive hearers, but they consider that theirs is a case which the Gospel cannot touch. They imagine that they are excluded from all participation in the mercies of God. To hear them talk, you would suppose that they had read the roll which contains the names of those for whom the divine act of amnesty and oblivion has been passed, and had discovered that their names were not written there.

Well now, dear friend, though you are far off through your own fear and apprehension, I want to comfort you with the assurance that the Lord has many sons and daughters who are in a similar condition to yourself. I can speak from experience upon this point, for I was long in that sad condition. I judged that the salvation of my brother, and sisters, and friends, was possible, but not my own. I came to the conclusion that all other young men might be saved, but—I did not quite know why—yet I nevertheless felt that I never could be saved. I imagined that I had sinned away my day of grace, or something of that sort equally absurd, yet I lived to prove that it was not so, for the Lord brought His son from far.

And you also, dear friend, may bow at the feet of Jesus, and He is here to say to you that however far off you may be in your own apprehension of your case, His Word still applies to you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Even if you feel that you cannot come to Him, look up to Him, for He has said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Who will say that He cannot look? A babe may look, a person with little education may look, one who is dying may look, a half-blind man may look. So, look unto Christ, and be ye saved, even though you are at the very ends of the earth.

So you see that the Lord has children who are far off from Him in several senses. Have you ever known what it is to have a child of yours far off from you? Thank God, some of us have never had the sorrow of having our children far off from us in character, or in love. They have always been true to us, and worthy to be held dear by us, yet we know from our observation of others, something of what it must be to have a son a long way off. What does a father or a mother do when the son is a long way off?

Why, they like to hear all they can about him, especially, they love to hear from him—to get a letter or a message from their boy himself.

Well, now, our Heavenly Father watches over all His poor wandering children. Many of them have forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten them. He exercises a wonderful care over them long before they are converted, and checks them in a thousand ways. There are some of you who would have laid violent hands on yourselves, before you were converted, if it had not been for God's restraining mercy, and some of you had so grossly sinned that you might have sinned the sin that is unto death if God had not just held you back at the nick of time. Long before regenerating grace is manifest, there is a prevalent grace which watches over the heirs of mercy who know not that they are heirs of mercy, and keeps them from going down into the pit because the Lord has found a ransom. You who have been brought to Christ, though you were far from Him, can tell this story as none others can.

II. Now we pass on to the second point, which is that THE LORD IS BRINGING HOME SOME OF THESE FAR OFF ONES. In our text He gives this command, "Bring my sons from far."

To whom is this command spoken? I think we shall be right if we say that it is spoken much in the same way in which the Lord said, "Let there be light," "and there was light." His fiat did the deed. So God says, "Bring my sons from far," and therefore we may be sure that they will be brought to Him.

First, *Providence obeys this command.* Everything that happens in the mysterious movements of providence is operating, under the controlling power of God, for the bringing in of His chosen. I like to read the newspaper somewhat in John Newton's fashion, with the view of knowing what is my Heavenly Father's next move, watching to see where next He means to turn His hand. I am not a great believer in the wisdom of our rulers, nor of any rulers whatever, but I rejoice that "the LORD reigneth," and that He is just as certainly effecting His eternal purposes by the folly of man as by the wisdom of man.

To me, the one thought concerning all the kingdoms of the earth is this—how is the Gospel advancing in Turkey, or in Afghanistan, or in other lands? I care for this world only for the sake of God's own people in it. The world is all scaffolding, the church of Christ is the true building. The ultimate purpose of God is the gathering out of the world, as many as He has given unto His Son, Jesus Christ, that they may have eternal life in Him, and glorify Him forever.

As you see those awful wheels of providence revolve, those wheels that are full of eyes—and as they grind on in their ever widening circles, you stand aghast, and are awed and terrified by them, yet you may know that they are always revolving with this purpose—the fulfillment of the everlasting counsel of God, and the giving unto Christ to see of the travail of His soul, that He may be satisfied. God is saying to the North, "Give up," and to the South, "Keep not back." His voice in providence is saying to all the powers that be, "Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

The like is true on a small scale. All manner of afflictions that come to men are sent to touch their conscience, and to bring them back to God. Many are brought to God by the loss of infants, by their own sickness, or by falling into poverty, who, speaking after the manner of men, would never come to God if it were not for these trying experiences. Many are my Master's black dogs with which He fetches His sheep into the fold, and when they won't come at the call of the Gospel, He often says, "Fever, fetch him in. Death, bring him to me."

There is a mother, who will not come to Christ in any other way, so He sends the black dog of bereavement to her, her child is carried to the cemetery, and in the day of her distress she seeks the Lord. This is frequently God's way of working, but by one means or another, He will bring His sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. All the dispensations of His providence shall work to that end.

This seems to me to be *a charge given to all God's people*, as well as to providence, "'Bring my sons from far.' You know Me, you love Me, so look after My wandering children." There is a well-known proverb, "Love me, love my dog," but God could give us a better one, "Love Me, love My children, love poor sinners. Go and find them, and bring them back to Me." Do not be satisfied till you

have brought them in. Make this your life work, let it be the one thing you live for, to bring God's children from far. Are there some, whom you know, who are very near to the kingdom? Try and bring them, but do you also know some others who are a long way off? Then, single them out, pray more for them than for other people, be most diligent to bring in those who are the worst and the least likely to come to Christ. "Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." Be sure not to neglect them, whatever else you do, mind that you preach to the Jerusalem sinners, the biggest and blackest sinners whom you can find anywhere. This is God's command to us who have ourselves been already brought to Him.

But this command would be of no force unless my text was, as I have already said it is, a fiat. In consistency with this command, *the Holy Spirit* goes forth in ways known to Himself, and He brings God's sons from far and His daughters from the ends of the earth. You remember the story of Thorpe and the other members of the Hell Fire Club, who met together for profane purposes on the Sabbath. It was decided that Mr. Thorpe should imitate Whitefield, so he went to hear that mighty preacher of the Gospel, got the sermon well off, preached it to his infidel companions, and by God's grace, became converted while doing so, and left the Hell Fire Club to become a heavenly fire preacher all the rest of his life.

O sovereign grace, what is there that Thou canst not do? When God says, "Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth," they are sure to be brought, and laid at His feet, and added to His church, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

III. Now I am going to conclude with my third point, which is that THIS IS SAID FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF GOD'S CHURCH.

This command has a very intimate connection with Christ's church. Our text says, "Bring my sons and my daughters," but the fifth verse says, "I will bring thy seed." Then, saved souls are the seed of the church as well as the sons and daughters of God. God puts a wonderful honor upon human instrumentality. Paul represents himself as being, spiritually, both father and mother to souls that were born to God. He wrote to Philemon, "I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds," and to the Galatians he wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." Thus, great honor was put upon instrumentality, and the Lord is pleased to consider converts as the children of His church as well as His own children.

Now then, beloved, you who are members of the church of the living God, will you not take a deep interest in the bringing home of the far off ones, who are your own children—the children of the church, as well as the children of God? I trust that some of you will find them to be, literally, your own children—your own flesh and blood. May they all be converted, and may your word be blessed to their conversion, so that they may become your own spiritual children!

The whole church of God ought to think, with the deepest sympathy, of all those who are hopeful, those who are impressed, those who are coming to Christ, and never to rest satisfied until they are all brought safely home. We should never be content till we get them to confess their faith in Christ, and know that they are indeed saved in the Lord with His everlasting salvation.

Many of you know that I am expecting my son home from Australia. One feels inclined to run down to Plymouth to meet the ship, and I should like to send some of you down to meet those who are coming where they first touch the land—that is, where they begin to believe in Jesus. Do you not feel that you want to go as far as you can to meet the sinner who is coming to Christ, to try to take away his last fear, to smooth the last wrinkle from his face, and to tell him that he is fully and freely forgiven through the precious blood of Jesus?

I hope, dear Christian friends, that you will all have deep sympathy with our Heavenly Father, so that you will say, "If He is bringing His sons from far, let us go meet them and do the utmost that we can to show them that they shall have a hearty welcome, not only to their Father's house, but to our hearts also."

I have known professing Christians whose children have grown up to be their sorrow and their curse. I said to a Sister, who brought the last of her children to join the church, “You are a favored woman, for I know some who I hope are Christians, yet their children are turning out very badly.” She said, “Have you noticed, sir, whether they have family prayer or not?” That was a wise question, for where there is no family prayer, we cannot expect to see the children grow up in the fear of God. There may be a public profession of religion, but if there is no practice of religion at home, if its true position is not distinctly recognized every day, we cannot wonder if the young people do not go in the right way.

Neglect anywhere is sure to bring evil consequences, but in keeping God’s commandments there is always a great reward. How many of God’s faithful servants have I seen, who began their Christian life early, and took their stand for Christ, and in taking that stand had to bear opposition, and persecution, and loss, yet they soon got over all that and God greatly prospered them!

They brought up their children in the fear of the Lord, and it cost them many a pang to speak severely to them, or to use the rod when it was needed, but they did what God would have them do, and He blessed them. And now you can see the venerable patriarch with his children and his grandchildren around him, prospered in his business, happy in his own person, blessed himself and made a blessing to others. Many a time I have seen this cheering sight and I have learned that even in this life, in keeping God’s commandments there is great reward.

The church of Christ has a further interest in these far off sons and daughters from the fact that not only are they her seed, but *they are coming home to her*. All those who are God’s spiritual children shall certainly come into His church. They may not join our portion of His church, but they will help to strengthen the true church of God. But some of these far off ones will come to us, so should we not be getting ready to welcome them? Let us have no surly tempers in our midst, no cold hearts, and no divisions, because when these young converts come among us, they will be frightened if they find us full of evil passions, and with little or no love to Christ.

I like to see a church keep herself in such a state that she is always ready to welcome “the little stranger”—the newborn child of God—whenever it comes into her midst. Whatever quarrels there may be in the streets, we must always have peace at home for the sake of these little ones.

I would like sometimes, to say to those who have noisy church meetings, or who display a party spirit, “Hush, be quiet, for the sake of these newcomers. Do not let them be hurt in their feelings and injured in their minds,” and to you older Christians I would affectionately say, “Always keep your hearts young, and warm, and cheerful, that you may be a help to those who have just come into the church, for if they see a crabby looking face, or if they hear harsh and unkind words, they are very likely to say, “This is not the place for us, this cannot be our Father’s house.”

Or else they will think, perhaps, that they have met an elder brother like the one in the parable, and it is very likely that they have, and it is always a pity if the poor prodigal, when coming back, meets his elder brother before he meets his father. It was a great mercy for the prodigal that he met his father first, for his loving welcome enabled him afterwards to endure very different treatment from his unbrotherly elder brother. Do not let any of us play the elder brother in that fashion, but let us be glad to receive the wanderers whenever they come and unite with us.

For remember that these who are coming—these outsiders who are going to be brought in—these far off ones who are being brought home—*will greatly help us when they do come*. Read the seventh verse: “Even every one who is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory.” That is the kind of converts and members that we want, those who are created for God’s glory.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are living for God’s glory, are we not? Is not that the great end and objective of our being? Well, here come some recruits to join our ranks, and some of them are the best recruits that can be found anywhere. A number of young Christians constantly coming into a church is a great blessing to that church. It tends to keep all the members alive, and full of earnestness and vigor.

“But,” say some of the older friends, “these young converts are so imprudent.” Bless them! The Lord increase their imprudence, for that is one of the grandest things in the world when it is sanctified. It was

most imprudent, on the part of the apostle Paul, to go into those cities where he was stoned, and dragged out, and left for dead. It was most imprudent of him, was it not, to lose his reputation and his standing among men simply that he might preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified? May our young converts always maintain such grand imprudence as that!

“But sir,” say the objectors, “these young people, who are coming into the church do not know much.” For that matter, brethren, we do not know much either, so we cannot keep them out on that ground. “But they have zeal without knowledge.” Yes, brother, and it is quite possible to have knowledge without zeal. Both of those things are bad when alone, but my brother, if you have the knowledge, and they bring the zeal, you have only to trade with them a little in the way of barter to your mutual benefit. You can give them some of your knowledge, which will not be to their loss, and they can give you some of their zeal, which will be very much to your gain, so fetch them in as speedily as you can.

I remember the case of a godly man, who prayed very fervently for the conversion of his children, yet he never saw one of them saved until he was the means of bringing to Christ a very desperate sinner, and when that great sinner was converted, he became the means of the conversion of that good man’s children.

The Lord has many ways of working out His eternal purposes. There are some people for whom you are praying, yet possibly, you will never bring them to Christ by merely praying for them, while others, for whom you have never yet specially prayed, if you will talk to them faithfully and earnestly, you may bring them in by God’s great grace, and then they may be the means of bringing in others.

You must never imagine that you are to pick and choose who is to be saved. That is not a matter that is left to you, and the Lord’s choice may be very different from your choice. The way for you to ascertain God’s choice is to talk about Christ to everybody you meet, try to bring everyone to Christ. The Lord will do the sorting far better than you can, He never makes a mistake.

Your part is to cast the net into the sea, and to enclose all the fish if you can get them in, and then haul them ashore if it is possible. There will not be one more really in the Gospel net beside those whom God has ordained to bless and save. Therefore do not you be afraid to cast the net in again and again.

Especially, dear friends, let every one of us look after the far off ones who are coming home, and be ready to welcome them. God grant that they may not be wrecked in the last part of their voyage! May all go safely, even if roughly, with them, and may they come to land praising redeeming grace and dying love, in which song you and I will join both now and forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 43:1-7, 18-28 AND 44:1-2

Isaiah Chapter 43. Verse 1. *But now thus says the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

Observe the tender ties that bind our God to His people—creation, the formation of them for His praise, redemption, the purchase of them for Himself, and the calling of them by their name. The Lord remembers the bonds which unite us to Himself even when we forget them, He recollects His eternal love, and all the deeds of mercy that have flowed from it. Though our memory is treacherous, and our faith is feeble, “yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself,” blessed be His holy name!

2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee;*

His presence is all that we need even in the deepest floods of tribulation, this He has promised to us. He does not say what He will do for us, but He does tell us that He will be with us, and that is more than enough to meet all our necessities.

2. *And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

That is a wonderful picture of a man walking through fire, and yet not being burned, but there was a greater wonder that was seen by Moses, which may well comfort us. He saw a bush that burned with fire, and yet was not consumed. Now a bush, in the desert, is usually so dry that at the first application of fire, it flames, and glows, and is speedily gone, yet you and I, who are, spiritually, just as dry and combustible as that bush was naturally, may burn, and burn, and burn, yet we shall not be consumed, because the God, who was in the bush, is also with us, and in us.

3. *For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.*

And He has given infinitely more than that for us who are His people now, for He gave His only begotten Son that He might redeem us with His precious blood. Now that we have cost Him so much, is it likely that He will ever forsake us? It is not possible.

4. *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.*

How sweetly this verse comes home to those whose characters have been disreputable! As soon as they are truly converted to Christ, they become “honourable.” “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable.” God does not call His people by their old names of dishonor, but He gives them the title of “Right Honorable,” and makes them the nobility of His Court. “Unto you that believe, He is an honour,” and you have honor in Him and from Him.

5-7. *Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.*

The Lord seems to dwell upon that note of the creation of His children for His own glory. This accounts for many of our troubles, and for all our deliverances, it is that God may be glorified by bringing His children through the fires and through the floods. A life that was never tested by trial and trouble would not be a life out of which God would get much glory, but they that do business in the great waters see the works of God, and His wonders in the deep, and they give Him praise, and besides, when they come to their desired haven, then they praise the Lord for His goodness, and God is thereby glorified.

Verses 18-19. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing;*

It is a very profitable thing to remember the things of old, it is greatly beneficial to us to study what God did in years and ages long gone by, yet God intends to do for us something in the future that shall eclipse all the past. Especially was this true in Isaiah’s day, for the coming of Christ, which was then in the future, was to be such a sunrising of mercy that all the stars of blessing that had shone before, would seem to be lost in the brightness of His appearing.

Dear friends, do not always dwell on the past. You who are getting grey are very apt to say that the former things and former times were better than now. Do not say so, but believe this promise of JEHOVAH, “Behold, I will do a new thing.”

19-20. *Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls:*

I have sometimes laid hold of this text, and have been comforted by it concerning the conversion of the very worst of men. Some people say, “What is the good of going among blasphemers and profane persons with the Word of God?” Well, if the beast of the field, and the dragons, and the owls, shall honor Him, we need never think of leaving any of the sons of men to perish. It is not what they are, but what God is, that should give us confidence concerning them. Even if they were worse than they are, the omnipotent grace of God would still be able to reach them, and to convert them, let us have no doubt about this matter.

20. *Because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.*

Oh, the wonders of the love of God! Wherever He has a chosen people, there every mercy shall certainly come. If they are in the wilderness, waters shall come to them, if they are in the desert, rivers shall flow to them, but drink they shall have till they come where they can drink to the full at the living fountains of water at God's right hand.

21. *This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

Here is this same note again. Yet mark what kind of people they had been—a people whom God had greatly loved, but who had backslidden from Him. They had wandered very far away from God, yet still His purpose of love did not change, “This people I have formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” What a blessed “shall” that is, uttered by One who knows how to make it good by deeds of mighty grace!

22. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.*

They were not much like Jacob, for he prayed at Jabbok, and became Israel, who wrestled till he prevailed, saying to the angel, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.” Yet here are people who bear the same name—“Jacob” and “Israel,” yet God has to say to them, “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob. Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.”

23. *Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.*

Is that true of any of you? Have you restrained prayer, and have you also stinted God in your offering? Whereas He gave His Son for you, have you refused the small cattle of your burnt offerings?

23. *I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense.*

“I have laid no tax upon you; I have not demanded so much of your income as a condition for your being members of My church. I have left it to your love and gratitude to bring your freewill offerings to Me.”

24. *Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money,—*

No calamus or incense that should sweeten the temple of God,—

24. *Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but—*

Oh, this “but—but”!

24. *Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,—*

You have made a servant of your Master—treated your Redeemer as if He were your slave!

24. *Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Oh, what a terrible verse this is about a people whom God had formed for Himself, and who shall yet show forth His praise! Alas! this is how they sometimes are still—indifferent, ungrateful, presenting Him no tokens of love, but on the contrary, disobedient, grieving Him, and vexing His Holy Spirit. What will He do with them now? “Cut them off and reject them,” says one. Yes, that is how men would do, but that is not what God will do. Listen:—

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

You have forgotten His mercies, but He will forget your sins. You have grieved Him, but He still has a tender heart towards you. He will blot out your sins. Oh, how this ought to melt us! How this ought to encourage us to begin again in better style, and to be much in prayer, and much in holy service, and much in self-sacrifice!

26-28. *Put me in remembrance: let us contend together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

Isaiah Chapter 44. Verses 1-2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.*

He comes back to that point again, you see: “Israel whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD that made thee.” See the deep argument for infinite love. God will not forsake the work of His own hands. “I have formed thee, and chosen thee; therefore, fear thou not, but come to me anew, and serve me henceforth with all thine heart.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—625, 627

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